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ABSTRACT

Although much of the current school reform movement relies on the basic assumption of effective elementary school administration, insufficient effort has been made to synthesize key concepts found in organizational theory and management studies with relevant effective schools research findings. This paper attempts such a synthesis to help develop a clearer concept of elementary school principalship effectiveness. Following some definitions of key terms, the paper presents several concepts from organizational/management theory, including the Getzels-Guba Model of Organizational Social System Functioning, Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs, and Glickman's Paradigm of Teacher Categories. These concepts are then correlated with relevant effective schools research findings, such as Edmonds's five correlates, Purkey and Smith's nine characteristics of effective schools, Salganick's profile of the strong principal, and Dwyer's characteristics of effective principals. Finally, some mnemonics for elementary school principal effectiveness are outlined. (24 references) (MLH)

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THE EFFECTIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: THEORETICAL BASES, RESEARCH FINDINGS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

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THE EFFECTIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: THEORETICAL BASES, RESEARCH FINDINGS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

by

Dr. I. Emett Burnett, Jr. and Dr. Anita M. Pankake

Meaningful school reform requires a functional concept of what effectiveness means in the practice of the principalship. Although much of the current school reform movement relies upon the basic assumption of effective elementary school administration, we hold that insufficient thought has been given to synthesizing key concepts found in organizational theory and management studies with relevant findings of the Effective Schools Research. Through that process, a clearer concept of elementary school principalship effectiveness might be developed.

We will open this discussion by defining the key terms "effective elementary school principal" and "instructional leadership." Several pivotal concepts drawn from organizational/management theory will then be presented and correlated with relevant findings of the Effective Schools Research. Finally, we will propose practical implications for specific behaviors tending to increase the effectiveness of the elementary school principal.

Basic Definitions

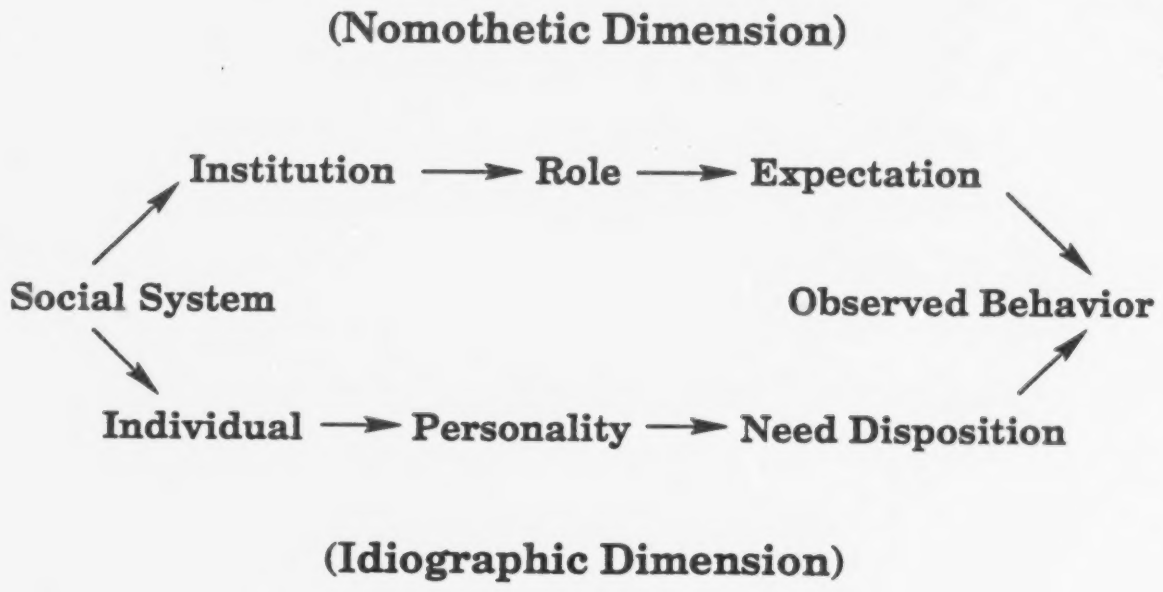
For the purpose of this discussion, we present the definition of the effective elementary school principal by Pankake and Burnett in The Effective Elementary School Principal (1990), i.e., "the officially designated administrator/leader of a school comprising one or more grade levels of the K-8 continuum who: 1) has identified and prioritized specific measurable educational outcomes desired for the school, and 2) can demonstrate empirically the extent to which those prioritized goals have been achieved within a specified time schedule" (p. 77). Note that the emphasis is on effective behavior by the principal in the areas of goal-setting, operational leadership, and accountability for outcomes.

We consider the development of requisite skills in instructional leadership essential to the principal's development of his/her effectiveness. We define instructional leadership as "the continuous and harmonious process of releasing the creative human potential of the instructional staff of the school in such a manner that the educational goals of the school are achieved" (Pankake & Burnett, 1990, p.57). This formulation has its conceptual roots in the approach to instructional supervision advanced by Lovell and Wiles (1983). It is based upon linking effectively the positive potential found in each teacher with learning outcome-focused accountability of the principal.

Key Concepts Drawn from Organizational/Management Theory

In our judgment, three commonly accepted constructs drawn from organizational and management theory have special significance in examining the concept of principal effectiveness at the elementary school level. The first was advanced by Getzels and Guba (1957, 1958) and has been described as a model of organizational social system functioning (Pankake & Burnett, 1990). For the purpose of analysis it is presented below:

Figure 4-1: The Getzels-Guba Model of Organizational Social System Functioning



Getzels, J.W. "Administration as a Social Process" in A.W. Halpin, Administrative Theory in Education, New York: Macmillan, p. 156. (Reprinted with permission of the publisher.)

The significance of the Getzels-Guba model lies in its clear delineation of social activity within an organization such as an elementary school along two distinct yet interrelated dimensions. The nomothetic dimension represents the impersonal organizational structure of the school. The idiographic dimension represents the highly personal independent life of each educator working within the school. Essentially, "each dimension consists of three district elements, which are parallel to and interactive with comparable elements comprising the other dimension" (Pankake & Burnett, 1990). The net outcome of all this distinctly identifiable yet interactive activity along both dimensions is observed behavior characterizing the total organization, i.e., the school.

This construct is significant precisely because it presents clearly the duality of the essential process of interaction between the impersonal objective aspects of elementary school leadership and the highly personal subjective influences arising from the individual members of the faculty. The principal must ultimately address and achieve the formal goals of the school through his/her management of daily operations with and through the teachers. We believe that only by taking both the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions into consideration and synthesizing a functional program of action adequately addressing and supporting both can the principal's work become truly effective.

A second theory upon which we draw extensively is Maslow's "hierarchy of human needs" (1943, 1954). This theory posits the existence of a continuum of motivational levels arising out of human nature and therefore common to all persons. The individual's present position on the hierarchy is determined by past experiences and present circumstances. Our adaptation of Maslow's hierarchy is presented below:

Figure 4-2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs

Adapted from Maslow, A. (9143) Motivation and Personality, Psychological Review 50 (July 1943) pp. 370-96.
(Reprinted by permission.)

The importance of this hierarchy to the work of the effective elementary principal is to be found in Maslow's position that effective motivation of the individual arises primarily from within the person as he/she attempts to meet those intrinsic needs that are dominating his/her life at the moment. A teacher cannot address higher level needs such as ego/esteem needs and the need for self-actualization as long as lower level needs remain unsatisfied. It is also important to note that "it is quite possible for an individual's motivational level to move up or down the hierarchy depending upon the types of personal needs he/she is currently experiencing in his/her life situation" (Pankake & Burnett, 1990, p. 64).

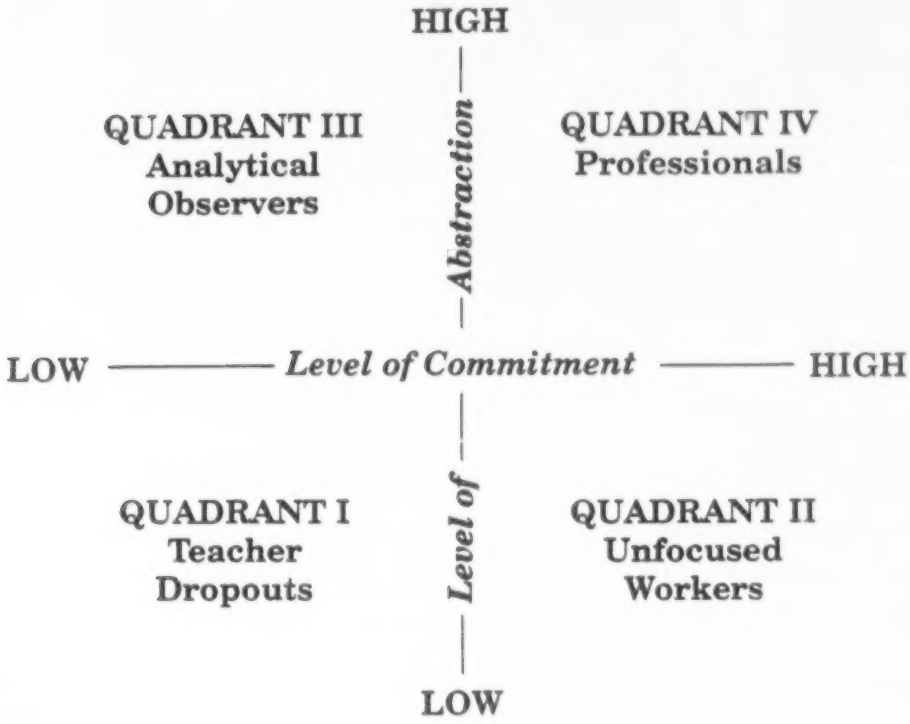
If Maslow is correct in positing that each individual can address effectively only motivations appropriate to his/her current level on the hierarchy, significant implications arise for the effective practice of the principalship. The effective principal will attempt to get as many of the faculty as possible functioning at the higher levels, i.e., self-actualization or at least ego/esteem-satisfaction. However, motivational approaches appropriate to those levels will not work effectively with teachers functioning at the lower levels-social, safety/security, or even basic physiological needs.

The underlying implication to be found here is that the effective elementary school principal must take into consideration the individual motivational level of each member of the faculty at the given moment. Because the level of the teacher on Maslow's hierarchy can change either upward or downward, the effective principal must be able to assess accurately the current need level of each individual and take appropriate motivational action in providing the instructional leadership needed to help each teacher provide effective teaching for students.

Finally, we hold that the findings of Glickman (1981, 1985, 1990) concerning the need to pinpoint each teacher accurately on the interrelated axes of commitment level and level of abstraction are of great importance to the work of the effective elementary school principal.

Glickman has gone to considerable length to point out that he has not simply posited the existence of four distinct categories of teachers, but has presented the concept of identifying a teacher's specific location on an interactive grid comprising the distinct variables of commitment level and level of abstraction, i.e., knowing what to do in delivering instruction and how best to do it in the given circumstances (Pankake & Burnett, 1990). He originally (1981) presented three distinct types of supervisory approaches and later (1985, 1990) expanded that number to four. Glickman's grid with its four quadrants is presented below:

Figure 4-3: Glickman's Paradigm of Teacher Categories



Glickman, Carl G. (1981). Developmental supervision: Alternative practices for helping teachers improve instruction. p.48. Reprinted with permission of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Copyright © by ASCD. All rights reserved.

The major concepts derived from Glickman are: 1) where a teacher falls on the interactive grid of commitment level and level of abstraction is critical information needed by the instructional supervisor; 2) certain supervisory approaches work best with individuals found in certain quadrants of the grid; and 3) the instructional supervisor (principal) must be able to adjust his/her supervisory approach to the individual teacher's location on the grid. Generally, a directive approach works best with teachers low on both commitment and abstraction, while a collaborative approach is more suited to teachers low on one variable but high on the other. A non-directive approach is recommended for teachers high on both variables.

Effective Schools/Principals Research

Having cited selected works drawn from organizational and management theory, we must now turn to what the Effective Schools Research has to say concerning principal effectiveness. As most of the initial Effective Schools Research was based upon data gathered in elementary schools, its applicability to defining elementary school principal effectiveness is significant.

The body of writing and research commonly called the Effective Schools Research was in many respects a reaction to the massive study completed in 1966 by a team of researchers led by James Coleman. Commissioned by the U.S. Office of Education, the purpose of the Coleman Study was to investigate how school characteristics influenced student achievement. Coleman and his colleagues concluded that "the most important variable in or out of school remains the educational and social background of the child's family" (Ornstein & Levine, 1981). Right or wrong, the general interpretation of this conclusion generated a climate in which the belief that schools no longer made any difference flourished. Brookover summarized the consequences of such conclusions by stating, "American education for three-quarters of a century has been dominated by a belief that what children learn is a result of what they bring from their family. Typical explanations of student failure never mention teaching. They never mention the school" (cited in Olson, 1986, p.11).

It was the reactive stance of a small number of researchers to this fait accompli regarding school influence on student achievement that initiated the research efforts we have come to call the Effective Schools Research.

Over a decade of Effective Schools Research has now accummulated. The initial efforts dealt with small samples and findings were correlational. In fact, the correlational design of the research efforts brought about various lists of school characteristics commonly called the Effective School Correlates. Depending on the writer/researcher, the lists of correlates vary in number but contain some similarities.

Edmonds (1982) identified five correlates:

-The leadership of the principal is characterized by substantial attention to the quality of instruction.

-A pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus exists.

-An orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning is present.

-Teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery are evident.

-The use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation is stressed.

In their review of a number of studies, Purkey and Smith (1982) identified nine characteristics of an effective school. Their analysis revealed these characteristics to be: (1) school-site management; (2) leadership; (3) staff stability; (4) curriculum articulation and organization; (5) staff development; (6) parental involvement and support; (7) school wide recognition of academic success; (8) maximized learning time; and (9) district support.

Other writers/researchers such as Squires, Huitt and Segars (1983), Gorton (1983), and Andrews (cited in Brandt, 1987) have presented their own lists of Effective School Correlates. Each has its own number of emphasis areas and arrangement or grouping of elements. The important point of all of this for our purpose is the consistent reference to leadership in each list. Though not always identified positionally as the principal, leadership appears repeatedly in the writings on effective schools.

The recurrence of this characteristic led to more research focused on school leadership and specifically on the characteristics and behaviors of principals in effective schools. According to Bossert (1985), "Effective schools have effective principals" (p.40).

Attempts to define and describe leadership are not new, extending over centuries rather than years. Numerous definitions of leadership have been proffered and various attempts at operationalizing them have resulted. Research on the effective principal represents one more line of inquiry contributing to our knowledge of who leaders are and what they do.

By no stretch of the imagination can we assert that the data are complete regarding leadership generally or Effective Principals specifically. Still, even a cursory review of findings from research and writing on effective principals allow at least a tentative sketch of a leadership portrait.

Salganik's early research (1980) on "schools that work" reported the schools studied were headed by strong principals who:

-possessed ideas which they consistently followed.

-expected, even demanded, that teachers teach and children learn.

-allowed teaching variations from classroom to classroom rather than dictating how teachers should teach.

-made use of the specific talents of their faculty members.

-provided an atmosphere in which teachers were encouraged to solve their own problems rather than be given "right answers" from the principal.

One of the pioneers of the Effective Schools Research, Ron Edmonds, spoke to the leadership issue as well. He noted that principals in effective schools spent time in classrooms rather than their offices. Additionally, the time spent in the building and classrooms was focused on "instructional matters". He pointed out further that no specific style was common to these individuals, but that even though styles varied, they all centered on obtaining "certain professional outcomes". Finally, he made reference to the increased amount of professional consultation that occurred in effective schools.

Dwyer's work (1984) also emphasized that different strategies or styles were used by effective principals. Through a variety of ways, principals in the schools studied were:

-visible in the school and available to staff and students.

-attentive to details and possessed a "routine nature" in their "acts and activities".

-attentive to the school environment, public relations, and student achievement.

-concerned with monitoring, controlling and exchanging information, planning student interaction, plant maintenance, and selecting and developing staff.

Two additional examples of what has been advanced regarding effective principals should be helpful. First, Bossert (1985) identified effective principals as those who: (1) emphasize goals and production, (2) possess power and have decision-making

skills, (3) have great skills in managing and coordinating instructional matters, and (4) have strong human relations skills both inside and outside the school.

Andrews (cited in Brandt, 1987) asked teachers to report the most important characteristics of principals in what he identified as "high profile schools." These teacher reports centered on three areas: (1) setting of a "vision", i.e., or the principals' definite ideas about the purposes of their schools; (2) resource access and allocation; and (3) visibility. Andrews added to these areas by stressing that principals in these high profile schools "have a keen understanding of curriculum and instruction" and an ability to communicate at three different levels--interpersonal, small group and with the larger community outside the school" (cited in Brandt, 1987, p.13).

"Knowledge of curriculum and instruction, effective communication skills with staff, students and community, goal orientation, concern for the physical and emotional school environments, consistency in their behaviors and their expectations for others, concern for the development of staff, visibility and attentiveness to student achievement appear to the be the most common findings in studies of effective principals" (Pankake & Burnett, 1990, p. 43).

Making Connections Between Theory and Research

In the introduction of this we indicated paper that we would present concepts drawn from organizational/ management theory and relevant findings of the effective schools research and attempt to correlate the two. To do this, we have excerpted key statements presented in the section of this paper discussing theory and used those statements as major headings. Under each of these headings, we have listed specific items identified in our brief review of the effective schools/principals literature. The items listed were selected based on their reference to specific characteristics or behaviors that operationalize the theoretical concepts.

A number of the references cited in this paper bear direct relevance to the Getzels-Guba model of organizational social system functioning. The following passage was selected from the text of this paper as capturing the essence of the model. What follows the passage are effective schools/principals research findings which we believe operationalize the points made regarding the widespread mingling of both nomothetic and idiographic elements in the practice of the effective principal.

> **Getzels' and Guba's - Social System Theory** (p. 5 of this paper) "...the duality of the essential process of interaction between the impersonal objective aspects of elementary school leadership and the highly personal subjective influences arising from the individual members of

the faculty. The principal must ultimately address and achieve the formal goals of the school through his/her management of daily operations with and through the teachers."

Nomothetic	Idiographic
-an orderly safe climate conducive to teaching and learning (Edmonds, 1982)	-made use of specific talents of their faculty members (Salganik, 1980)
-redirection of school resources to basic instruction and curriculum (Gorton, 1983)	-allowed variations from classroom to classroom rather than dictating how teachers should teach (Salganik, 1980)
-strong principals who expected, even demanded that teachers teach and children learn (Purkey & Smith, 1982)	-provided an atmosphere in which teachers were encouraged to solve their own problems rather than be given 'right answers (Salganik, 1980)
-school-wide recognition of academic success (Purkey & Smith, 1982)	-staff development (Purkey & Smith, 1982)
-setting a vision, i.e., having definite ideas about the purpose of their school (Andrews 1987).	-visible in the school and available to staff and students (Dwyer, 1984)
-emphasize goals and production (Bossert, 1985)	-have strong human relations skills both inside and outside the school (Bossert, 1985)

The preceding lists are by no means exhaustive. We do believe, however, they demonstrate the effective schools/principals research findings have relevance to the concept of mutually interdependent functioning of both idiographic and nomothetic dimensions in the operation of the school as a social system as developed by Getzels and Guba. We infer therefore that the effective elementary school principal will manage his/her school in such a manner that both dimensions are sythesized successfully.

A clear relationship to Maslow's hierarchy of human needs can be found in a number of the references cited in this paper. Again, a passage from our presentation of Maslow's theory is presented and related findings from the effective schools/principals research follow.

> **Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs** (pp. 6-7 of this paper)"...the effective elementary school principal must take into consideration the individual motivational level of each member of the faculty at the given moment...and...must be able to assess accurately the current need level of each individual and take appropriate motivational action in providing the instructional leadership needed to help each teacher provide effective teaching for students."

Basic Physiological Needs & Safety/Security Needs:
- -an orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning (Edmonds, 1982; Gorton, 1983; Shoemaker, n.d.; Squires, Huitt, & Segars, 1983)
- -staff stability (Purkey & Smith, 1982)
- -attentive to details and possessing a "routine nature in the "acts and activities" (Dwyer, 1984)
- -concerned with plant maintenance (Dwyer, 1984)
- -get resources to help the teacher deliver (Andrews, 1987 cited in Brandt)
- -possessed ideas they consistently followed (Salganik, 1980)

Social Needs:
- -attentive to the school environments, public relations, and student achievement (Dwyer, 1984)
- -visible in the school and available to staff and students (Dwyer, 1984)
- -concerned with monitoring, controlling and exchanging information (Dwyer, 1984)
- -have strong human relations skills both inside and outside the school (Bossert, 1985)

Ego/Esteem Needs:
- -in these effective school more professional consultation occurred (Edmonds 1981 cited in Morris)
- -made use of the specific talents of their faculty members (Salganik, 1980)
- -a climate in which administrators and teachers set high standards for students and themselves (Gorton, 1983; Squires, Huitt & Segars 1983; Andrews, 1987 cited in Brandt; Salganik, 1980)

Need for Self-Actualization:
- -concerned with developing staff (Dwyer, 1984)
- -styles and personalities of these individuals varied (Edmonds 1981 cited in Morris; Dwyer, 1984)
- -positive outlook about their work and experience higher job satisfaction (Bauck, 1987)
- -provided an atmosphere in which teacher were encouraged to solve their own problems rather than be given "right answers" from the principal (Salganik, 1980)

All of the references cited above have relevance to the concept of the principal being able to assess accuarately where each individual with whom he/she works is situated in terms of Maslow's hierarchy in order that appropriate motivational approaches may be employed to enlist the efforts of all in the overall pursuit of effectiveness for the school.

Finally, the points made by Glickman in his model of Developmental Supervision give direction for leadership behavior. A number of the findings of the effective schools/principals research bear close relationship to Glickman's concepts.

> **Glickman's Developmental Supervision** (p. 8 of this paper) "...1) Where a teacher falls on the interactive grid of commitment level and level of abstraction is critical information needed by the instructional supervisor; 2) certain supervisory approaches work best with individuals found in certain quadrants of the grid; and 3) the instructional supervisor (principal) must be able to adjust his/her supervisory approach to the individual teacher's location on the grid."

<u>commitment:</u> desire and will of the teacher to teach effectively...
- -an assumption that all students can and will learn (Brookover et al, 1979)
- -substantial attention to the quality of instruction (Edmonds, 1982)
- -curriculum articulation and organization (Purkey & Smith, 1982)

-school-wide recognition of academic success (Purkey & Smith, 1982)
-maximized learning time (Purkey & Smith, 1982); opportunity to learn and time on task (Shoemaker, n.d.)
-expectations for success (Squires, Huitt & Segars, 1983; Gorton, 1983; Andrews, 1987 cited in Brandt; Shoemaker, n.d.)
-allowed teaching variations from classroom to classroom rather than dictating how teachers should teach (Salganik, 1980)

<u>abstraction:</u> teacher's ability to define and solve instructional problems...

-the use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation (Edmonds, 1982)
-modeling, consensus building and feedback (Squires, Huitt, & Segars, 1983)
-frequent monitoring and reinforcing of pupil progress (Gorton, 1983; Andrews, 1987 cited in Brandt; Shoemaker, n.d.)
-provided an atmosphere in which teachers were encouraged to solve their own problems rather than be given "right answers from the principal (Salganik, 1980)
-in these effective schools more professional consultation occurred (Edmonds, 1981 cited in Morris)
-effective principals used the offering of alternatives as a technique (The Effective School Report, 1983)
-great skill in managing and coordinating instructional matters (Bossert, 1985)

The effective school's "pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus" (Edmonds, 1982) depends in the typical elementary school largely upon the principal's ability to assess properly where the individual teacher is located on Glickman's axes of commitment and abstraction. Bossert (1985) indicated that effective principls have great skills in managing and coordinating instructional matters. Knowing precisely where a given teacher is located in terms of commitment and abstraction is essential to those functions.

Practical Implications

We have tried to establish some connections between organizational/management theories, two of which (Maslow and Getzels-Guba) have been taught and discussed for more than a generation, and the body of research and writing on effective schools/principals. At this point we want to go one step further. In our book, The Effective Elementary School Principal (Pankake & Burnett, 1990), from which much of what is presented here is drawn, we summarized what we had presented throughout the text in a chapter entitled "Mnemonics for Effectiveness". The purpose of that chapter was to convert the concepts presented into easy-to-remember phrases for use by practitioners attempting to increase their effectiveness.

We have attempted to do the same here. This has not been done to trivialize the power of organizational/management theory and research, but to make those efforts useful to those whose behavior we seek to change, i.e., elementary principals. The volumes of papers, books, monographs, and research reports written on these topics indicate the masses of knowledge produced. However, decades of experience, have shown that knowledge produced is not necessarily knowledge used. These mnemonics are our attempt to propose strategies for operationalizing the "shoulds" suggested through theory and research.

The effective elementary school principal:

knows the difference between organization and leadership Organization results in needed structure; leadership results in mutual empathy. Both elements are necessary to effective management.

is organized for a purpose and has a purpose for organizing The effective principal sees merit to coordinating and managing every facet of the school--curriculum, evaluation, instruction, information, communication, etc. However, the coordination and and management are specifically to serve the purpose of maximizing effective instruction and therefore student learning.

understands and translates into appropriate action the principle of **"different strokes for different folks"** Meeting each member of the faculty at his/her appropriate level of motivation is essential if the inherent human potential present is to be utilized most productively.

understands effectiveness equals ability plus willingness The effective principal recognizes the difference between commitment and competence and adjusts his/her behavior according to the relationship between the two found in each individual teacher. Leadership is not limited to an approach serving the needs of the principal better than those of the individual teacher.

values and rewards dedicated teachers who teach effectively He/she makes such teachers full partners in the educational enterprise and utilizes their knowledge, skills, and commitment as beacons to full professionalism for other teachers. The effective principal **uses power to empower.**

understands that school effectiveness is the product of inspiration multiplied by perspiration He/she must first establish a consensus "vision" for the school and then work unceasingly with all involved to actualize that dream. **He/she is totally aware of how others affect effects.**

knows the total school is greater than the sum of its separate parts He/she realizes that the synergistic effect of people working together typically yields a product greater than that which would result if each person pursued his/her own goals independently.

have vision and visibility Effective principals have strong sense of purpose about their schools and what they could and should be. In addition to their vision and sense of mission, effective principals are visible in the classroom, hallways, communities, etc. of their schools.

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